

THE BLOOMFIELD CITIZEN.

SATURDAY, JULY 5, 1890

John Adams on Our National Holiday.

Whatever is noted in body and in estate by the festal incidents of our national anniversary should get the compliment from a fresh reading of the immortal letter of this great man to his noble and much loved wife. We think it will be an acceptable service to the readers of the Citizen to recall it in their memory. The circumstances of the time are familiar knowledge, but they will well enough bear to be fully recounted.

On the 10th of June, 1776, the Congress in session, sitting in the historic hall of Chestnut street, Philadelphia, spent a second day in debating the question—whether during the previous year and ever since the battle of Bunker Hill on the 17th of June, 1775, had been pressing itself on the minds of American patriots, viz., ought not the colonies to be declared free and independent states? We cannot all the events as they saw it. We cannot appreciate the reasons that held back some of the wise and earnest members from the great and irreversible step. The resolution in favor of it was postponed for further consideration to the first of July, but at the same time a committee was appointed to prepare a *Declaration* to the effect of the resolution. The appointment was made by ballot. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman and Robert R. Livingston were chosen. Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Adams were joined by the other members of the committee to make the draft of the *Declaration* and they did so. It was composed by Jefferson.

On the 1st of July, to which time the debate was adjourned, the subject was taken up by Congress and discussed through that day and the next. On the 2nd the vote was taken and it was resolved, that these United Colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states. That form is the Declaration of Independence. Through the fire and blood of six years of war it was upheld.

Through the fifty years from July 4th, 1776, to July 4th, 1826, Adams and Jefferson lived to see their country prosper under the principles and institutions they had acted so great a part in establishing. They witnessed a prosperity beyond their fondest hopes. They received the highest honors their Country could give. For long years before they passed from the earth they were revered by their countrymen, to whom their homes, the one in Quincy, the other at Monticello, in Virginia, were like sacred pilgrimage spots. The closing years of their lives were years of mutual respect and love of freedom, correspondence by letters, which is most interesting and delightful to read. By a marvellous coincidence, unexampled in history, both died on the 4th of July, 1826.

On Friday, the 30th of June preceding, one of his townsmen who on the next Tuesday was to deliver the oration in Quincy, visited Mr. Adams at his home. The venerable old man of ninety was feeble and evidently near his end. When asked for a toast at the coming celebration he said, "Give you Independence forever." After the celebration on the 4th was over, near evening, as the setting sun threw its fading splendors over the fields around his ancestral home, the spirit of the great and good man left his worn-out tenement and rose to higher spheres.

Mr. Jefferson had died in the early part of the day.

On the 3d of July he wrote this letter to his wife at her home in Quincy on the shore of Boston harbor, a wonderful letter, long, explanatory, fiery, argumentative, was prophetic, brilliant, and destined to live and stir the souls of countless men and women while history survives. The letter of a great man, on a great subject, and a great occasion, but one that would have been written only to a great woman worthy of such a man. She was Abigail Smith, daughter of Rev. William Smith, minister of the Congregational church of Weymouth, the adjoining town to Quincy, where Adams lived. She was descended from Puritan clergymen who came over when the Colony of Massachusetts began to be settled. She was of the Puritan nobility. The line of her ancestors had been distinguished in ministerial life: men of learning and letters, versed in religious and metaphysical knowledge, used to see discussions and debates. She was the worthy daughter of such a race. When young she and her sisters were familiar with the pages of Shakespeare and Milton, Dryden and Pope, of Addison and Swift, and of Butler and Locke, of Tickell and Berkeley. She was a vigorous, comely girl in body and mind, of the strictest principles, of high spiritual purpose. When Adams made love to the proud and handsome maiden, her family thought him beneath her, as he was the son of a shoemaker and farmer. But the shock he was of was nature's best and the young lawyer's compassionate talents and promises. When Adams made love to the heart of the girl. They were married October 25th, 1764, and now after twelve years of happy domestic life but most exciting public affairs, the dandies and splendid patriot who at the age of forty-one had made for himself a name renowned in Europe as well as in America, sends to his wife waiting at home to hear the re-

sult of the great debate, the letter that met the wishes of her queenly spirit.

Here is an extract from which the whole may be judged.

Yesterday the greatest question was decided which ever was debated in America, and a greater, perhaps, never was, or will be decided among men. A resolution was passed without one dissenting Colony that these United Colonies are, and "as such, fully and of right ought to be, fully power to make war, conclude peace, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which other states may rightfully do." You will see in a few days a declaration setting forth the cause which has impelled us to this mighty revolution, and the rights which will justify it in the sight of God and man. The 4th of July, 1776, will be the most momentous epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be "compensated" by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and a roar, with music, games, sports, guns, bells, bengal fires, and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward for evermore.

You will think me far sported with enthusiasm but I am not. I am well aware that it will cost us to maintain this declaration and support and defend these states. Yet through all the gloom I see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is near, and worth all the means, and that probably will triumph in that day's transaction, even although we should run it, which I trust in God shall not.

The national anniversary became not the 2nd of July when the decisive resolution was made, but the 4th of July, when the form of the writing to make it known in the world was agreed on. That form is the Declaration of Independence. Through the fires and blood of six years of war it was upheld.

Through the fifty years from July 4th, 1776, to July 4th, 1826, Adams and Jefferson lived to see their country prosper under the principles and institutions they had acted so great a part in establishing. They witnessed a prosperity beyond their fondest hopes. They received the highest honors their Country could give. For long years before they passed from the earth they were revered by their countrymen, to whom their homes, the one in Quincy, the other at Monticello, in Virginia, were like sacred pilgrimage spots. The closing years of their lives were years of mutual respect and love of freedom, correspondence by letters, which is most interesting and delightful to read. By a marvellous coincidence, unexampled in history, both died on the 4th of July, 1826.

The draft of the Declaration was taken up and debated through the 3d and on the 4th of July, when it was adopted. The final adoption of that immortal document on the 4th has made that day our national holiday, but when the resolution of the 2nd was passed the flood of severance was done and the mighty oak of Adams was exalted with boundless enthusiasm. In the debate that led to it he was a master spirit, the acknowledged superior, the convincing, per se, irresistible orator. There were no records kept of the speeches but the testimony of those who were present is all in the same effect. Adams was exalted with boundless enthusiasm. In the debate that led to it he was a master spirit, the acknowledged superior, the convincing, per se, irresistible orator. There were no records kept of the speeches but the testimony of those who were present is all in the same effect. Adams was exalted with boundless enthusiasm. 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